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**Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council**

## Note verbale dated 4 September 2012 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Office of the President of the General Assembly and, with reference to the decision of the Government of the Republic of Korea to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2013-2015 at the elections to be held in New York in 2012, and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, has the honour to submit the voluntary pledges of the Republic of Korea with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea would appreciate it if the present note and the annex thereto could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

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## Annex to the note verbale dated 4 September 2012 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

## Candidature of the Republic of Korea to the Human Rights Council, 2013-2015

**Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251**

# I. Introduction

1. Having served for two terms as a member of the Human Rights Council, from 2006 to 2011, the Republic of Korea has decided to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2013-2015 at the elections to be held by the General Assembly in New York in 2012.

2. The Republic of Korea attaches the utmost importance to human rights as a universal value and has placed highest priority on the advancement of human rights in the pursuit of its national and foreign policy goals. In addition, the Government of the Republic of Korea is fully committed to the promotion and protection of human rights around the world, in the firm conviction that respect for human rights is a prerequisite for peace, security and sustainable development.

3. As a State party to the following seven core international human rights instruments, including most of their optional protocols, the Government of the Republic of Korea strives to implement the provisions of the relevant conventions:

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1978)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1990)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1990)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1984)
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1995)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008).

4. At the Human Rights Council, the Government of the Republic of Korea has been playing an active role in human rights advocacy around the globe by constructively participating in a wide range of discussions and programmes for the promotion of all aspects of human rights. The Korean Government has fully engaged itself in the entire universal periodic review process in good faith, including the follow-up to the recommendations, while actively participating in the sessions of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. In addition, the Republic of Korea maintains a productive partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and cooperates fully with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, to which it has issued a standing

invitation. In line with its positive engagement at the Council, it also actively participated in the process of the review of the Human Rights Council, taking part in the effort of the international community to transform the Council into a more effective and credible body.

5. Furthermore, in the conviction that human rights is best served by democracy and democratic governance, the Korean Government has played a leading role in the formation of the Community of Democracies. It has subsequently played a key role in the work of the Community as a member of the Governing Council and Executive Committee of the Community.

6. The National Human Rights Commission of the Republic of Korea, established in November 2001, is an indispensable institution for the promotion and protection of human rights. Accredited with "A" status by the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions, the Commission continues to make meaningful contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights at the national level: it investigates and provides remedial measures for human rights violations, raises public awareness, and recommends legislative, institutional or policy initiatives related to human rights.

7. In addition, the Republic of Korea is implementing its second national action plan for the promotion and protection of human rights, for the period 2012-2016, in accordance with the recommendation made in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Covering 209 tasks relating to various aspects of human rights, the national action plan outlines the Korean Government's commitment to better human rights protection in line with its international human rights obligations.

8. The Government of the Republic of Korea has also enacted new laws and adopted legal amendments to ensure the advancement of human rights in a wide array of fields which include:

- Gender equality (the implementation of gender impact assessments in pan-governmental policy formulation and a gender-responsive budgeting system)
- The protection of vulnerable groups (a full-fledged revision of the Child Welfare Act for better prevention of child abuse, the enactment of the Act on Welfare Support of Children with Disabilities, the enactment of the Refugee Law and revisions to related law to ensure stronger punishment for the sexual violence against children)
- Non-discriminatory measures for foreigners residing in the Republic of Korea (the establishment of the First Basic Plan for Policies on Foreigners, 2008-2012, revisions to the Local Election Act to enable foreigners to have the right to vote in elections for local council members and the heads of local district governments, etc.).

## II. Voluntary pledges and commitments

9. In line with its dedication to the noble aim of the promotion and protection of human rights, the Republic of Korea commits itself to the voluntary pledges and commitments set out below.

**To further advance human rights at the national level**

10. The Republic of Korea is committed to upholding the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights, with a strong commitment to human rights as a universal value.

11. The Republic of Korea is committed to fully implementing the provisions of the international human rights instruments at the national level and taking the following steps with respect to the withdrawal of reservations made to and participation in the United Nations human rights instruments in accordance with the recent advancement of human rights in the Republic of Korea, including legal amendments and institutional developments in a wide array of fields:

- Ratifying the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the Convention
- Ratifying the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption and the 1980 Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction
- Ratifying the International Labour Organization Maritime Labour Convention (2006)
- Considering the withdrawal of its reservations made to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (art. 25; subpara. (e))
- Pursuing feasibility studies and other efforts towards becoming a party to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance
- Examining the possibility of accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

12. The Republic of Korea is committed to cooperating and working closely with the United Nations human rights treaty bodies, intensifying efforts to implement their recommendations, and ensuring the timely submission of national reports under the human rights instruments to which the Republic of Korea is a party.

13. The Republic of Korea is committed to strengthening the implementation of the second national action plan on human rights, for the period 2012-2016, in a transparent and accountable manner, thereby making real progress towards better enjoyment of human rights in the Republic of Korea.

14. The Republic of Korea is committed to strengthening efforts to promote and protect the rights of the vulnerable, including women, children and the disabled, so that they can equally enjoy their human rights.

15. The Republic of Korea is committed to enhancing cooperation and partnership with civil society for the advancement of human rights and good governance.

16. The Republic of Korea is committed to strengthening human rights education and training to enhance public awareness and thereby incorporate human rights into the mainstream in all sectors of society.

17. The Republic of Korea is committed to participating in the second cycle of the universal periodic review in an open and constructive manner.

**To further contribute to the advancement of human rights at the international level**

18. The Republic of Korea is committed to closely cooperating with the international community to advance human rights and address human rights violations around the world, with a strong commitment to human rights as a universal value.

19. The Republic of Korea is committed to cooperating with other Member States in their implementation of human rights obligations through various mechanisms such as technical cooperation, exchanges of experts, and the sharing of experience and best practices.

20. The Republic of Korea is committed to cooperating at the bilateral level, as well as through the United Nations system, for the strengthening of democracy, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

21. The Republic of Korea is committed to cooperating fully with the treaty monitoring bodies, through the timely submission of periodic reports, and prompt actions, and in good faith on their concluding observations and recommendations.

22. The Republic of Korea is committed to contributing to the ongoing efforts to strengthen the treaty body system.

23. The Republic of Korea is committed to rendering its full support to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in its endeavour to elevate standards of human rights observance and advance human rights conditions on the ground.

24. The Republic of Korea is committed to promoting intra- and cross-regional democratic progress and cooperation by providing technical expertise, offering full cooperation to countries requesting assistance in building democratic institutions, and playing an active role within the framework of the Community of Democracies and the Bali Democracy Forum.

25. The Republic of Korea is committed to participating actively in the discussions on the creation of regional and subregional machinery for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Asia-Pacific region.

26. The Republic of Korea is committed to incorporating a human rights perspective into its development policy, including official development assistance programmes, thus contributing to the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and good governance in partner countries.

**To contribute to the work of the Human Rights Council**

27. The Republic of Korea is committed to remaining constructively engaged in the activities of the Human Rights Council and supporting the fulfilment of its mandate and functions.

28. The Republic of Korea is committed to continuing its close collaboration with other Member States to make the Human Rights Council a fair and efficient body, so

that it can respond to urgent situations of human rights violations in a prompt and expeditious manner.

29. The Republic of Korea is committed to strengthening its efforts to further improve the effectiveness of the universal periodic review, through constructive engagement and dialogue with States under review, and cooperating fully with all the Council's special procedures, to which the Republic of Korea addressed a standing invitation, by rendering the full support necessary for the visit.

30. The Republic of Korea is committed to fostering a culture of cross-regional cooperation within the Human Rights Council, by taking initiatives on constructive intergroup dialogue and compromise, thus enabling the full implementation of its mandate and functions.